



News Release

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Utah Women Get Help Preparing for a Healthy Pregnancy *Power Your Life campaign offers free vitamins, family planning info*

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah – This summer, as many as 10,000 young Utah women will receive free multivitamins with folic acid to help ensure they're leading healthy lives when they have their babies. But the women don't need to be pregnant—or even thinking about becoming pregnant—to get the vitamins.

The new Utah Department of Health (UDOH) “Power Your Life, Power Your Health,” campaign will launch June 1 to promote healthy, pre-pregnancy lifestyles among 18- to 25-year-old women. As part of the effort, women can register to receive the vitamins and educational information online at www.poweryourlife.org.

“The message of the campaign is simple,” said Lois Bloebaum, Manager, UDOH Maternal and Infant Health Program. “Women need to be healthy themselves before they get pregnant, and they need to do everything they can to stay healthy to help make sure their babies are, too.”

That includes eating right, finding time for quick exercise even if they can't get to the gym, and avoiding drugs and excessive drinking. It also means understanding their family planning options and knowing that the decisions they make as they enter adulthood will affect the rest of their lives, whether they choose to have children or not.

A recent study shows that just two out of five Utah women of childbearing age take daily vitamin supplements with folic acid, and only one in 10 understand that it's a critical part of their health and their unborn child's development. Equally troubling is that the rate of Utah babies born with certain birth defects like spina bifida and cleft palate that could be prevented by folic acid rose more than 50 percent between 1999 and 2008.

“These birth defects can be fatal and they develop in a fetus just weeks after conception,” said Bloebaum. “Most mothers don’t even know they’re pregnant at that time. That’s why we want young women to take the vitamins and why we’re giving them away for free,” she said.

UDOH staff will spread the message about taking folic acid, leading a healthy life and planning for the future through a series of public service announcements, the poweryourlife.org website, social media, a colorful health magazine and by working closely with doctors and other health care providers.

They will also talk directly with women at a series of community events and cultural celebrations around the state this summer, reaching out largely to low-income and minority Utahns who struggle with more premature births and lower birth weight babies than the general population.

“Power Your Life, Power Your Health” was developed in response to a 2006 report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that recommended improved preconception health care. The Utah campaign is funded by a grant from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration.

To learn more about “Power Your Life, Power Your Health” and register to receive a free “Powerbag” that includes the vitamins and educational information, women are encouraged to visit www.poweryourlife.org which will be up and running June 7.

The Power Your Life team will distribute educational materials at the following events:

- Juneteenth 2010 – Ogden, June 18-20
- Heber Valley Powwow – Midway, June 18-20
- CARE Fair Junior League – SLC, July 9-10
- Samoan Cultural Celebration – West Valley City, July 14-17
- Native American Festival – SLC, July 24

For more information about Power Your Life, contact Lois Bloebaum at 801-538-6792 or visit www.poweryourlife.org.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.